


# LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
BUREAU OF PROSECUTION SUPPORT OPERATIONS
JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION

GEORGE GASCÓN • District Attorney
JOSEPH F. INIGUEZ • Chief of Staff

DIANA M. TERAN • Director


September 26, 2022

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Homicide Bureau
1 Cupania Circle
Monterey Park, California 91755

Re: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Raymundo Ceja
J.S.I.D. File #20-0074
L.A.S.D. File #020-03105-0600-013

Dear

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the March 1, 2020, fatal shooting of Raymundo Ceja by Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputy Tarek Salah. Our detailed analysis of this incident is contained in the attached memorandum.

Very truly yours,

GEORGE GASCÓN
District Attorney

By

ALAN YOCHELSON
Head Deputy District Attorney
Justice System Integrity Division

c: Deputy Tarek Salah, #


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## MEMORANDUM

TO: [redacted]
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Homicide Bureau
1 Cupania Circle
Monterey Park, California 91755

FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: Fatal Officer Involved Shooting of Raymundo Ceja
J.S.I.D. File #20-0074
L.A.S.D. File #020-03105-0600-013

DATE: September 26, 2022

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the March 1, 2020, fatal shooting of Raymundo Ceja by Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputy Tarek Salah. We have concluded that Deputy Salah acted in lawful self-defense and the defense of others.

The District Attorney's Command Center was notified of this shooting on March 1, 2020, at approximately 3:43 p.m. The District Attorney Response Team (DART) responded to the location, where they received a briefing and walk-through of the scene.

The following analysis is based on police reports, radio transmissions, LASD video surveillance, recorded interviews, crime scene photographs, ballistic reports, autopsy and toxicology reports, and other evidence submitted to this office by LASD Homicide Bureau Detectives Christopher Dimmitt and John O'Brien. Salah's voluntary statement was considered in this analysis. LASD deputies at the Santa Clarita Station were not equipped with body cameras when this incident occurred.

### FACTUAL ANALYSIS

On March 1, 2020, at 1:47 p.m., Raymundo Ceja parked a friend's Hyundai Sonata in the Santa Clarita Sheriff's Station public parking lot. Approximately forty minutes later, Ceja drove into the employee parking lot and parked in the northeast corner. At 2:29 p.m., Deputy Tarek Salah, who was wearing a full uniform, drove a marked, black-and-white patrol vehicle northbound in the employee parking lot towards the exit. [redacted] was accompanying Salah for a [redacted] and was seated in the front passenger seat. As Salah drove towards the exit, Ceja walked westbound in front of Salah's vehicle pointing what appeared to be a black, semiautomatic handgun directly at Salah. Salah exited the patrol vehicle, drew his duty weapon, and gave Ceja commands to drop the handgun. Several other deputies saw Ceja pointing what appeared to be a

handgun at Salah and gave Ceja commands to drop the weapon. Ceja stopped approximately ten feet in front of Salah and continued pointing the handgun directly at him. Salah told investigators that he believed Ceja was going to shoot and kill him. Salah fired two rounds from his duty weapon, striking Ceja twice. Ceja dropped the handgun and fell to the ground. Deputies approached Ceja and rendered medical aid. A replica Taurus airsoft pistol was recovered from the pavement next to Ceja. The Los Angeles County Fire Department (LAFD) transported Ceja to the Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital, where he was pronounced deceased at 3:05 p.m.



Replica pistol recovered from the scene.

[REDACTED] told investigators that as Salah was driving towards the exit, Ceja appeared on the front passenger side of the vehicle and continued walking laterally towards the driver's side while pointing a handgun directly at Salah. Salah stopped the vehicle and gave Ceja commands to drop the handgun. [REDACTED] was concerned for his own safety, but said Ceja seemed focused on Salah. [REDACTED] heard one gunshot before Ceja fell to the ground.

LASD video surveillance captured the incident and is consistent with the statements Salah and other witnesses made to investigators.

Investigators interviewed Ceja's family and friends. Ceja's [REDACTED] told investigators a month before the incident, Ceja said he was "stressed," was hearing voices, and had tried to kill himself with a handgun. One of Ceja's [REDACTED] told his [REDACTED] that Ceja had been using narcotics and believed somebody was "after him." Ceja lost his job a month before the incident. [REDACTED] told investigators Ceja had been staying at her apartment for a month. On the day of the incident, Ceja dropped [REDACTED] off at her work in her Hyundai. Later that morning, Ceja sent [REDACTED] a message saying he was not feeling well and was outside. When [REDACTED] spoke to Ceja, he told her he was hearing voices. Ceja left after [REDACTED] lunch break and arranged to pick her up at 3:00 p.m. At 2:00 p.m., Ceja sent [REDACTED] a message saying he

loved her, everything was fine, and her Hyundai would be at the police station. [REDACTED] messaged Ceja but he did not respond. [REDACTED], Ceja's [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] of his [REDACTED], told investigators Ceja had been losing weight and was acting paranoid during the last month. On the day of the incident, Ceja sent [REDACTED] messages saying goodbye.

Autopsy Report

On March 3, 2020, Los Angeles County Deputy Medical Examiner Zuhha Ashraf performed an autopsy and determined Ceja's cause of death to be gunshot wounds. Ceja suffered one gunshot wound to the midline upper chest that perforated his lung and one gunshot wound to the upper left thigh. The trajectory of both wounds was front to back, left to right and downward. Toxicology results indicated the presence of cocaine in Ceja's blood sample.

## LEGAL ANALYSIS

California law permits the use of deadly force in self-defense or in the defense of others if the person claiming the right of self-defense or the defense of others actually and reasonably believed that he or others were in imminent danger of great bodily injury or death. Penal Code section 197; *People v. Randle* (2005) 35 Cal.4th 987, 994 (overruled on another ground in *People v. Chun* (2009) 45 Cal.4th 1172, 1201); *People v. Humphrey* (1996) 13 Cal.4th 1073, 1082; *see also,* CALCRIM No. 505. The prosecution has the burden of proving beyond a reasonable doubt that a killing was not justified. CALCRIM Nos. 505, 507.

A peace officer is justified in using deadly force upon another person when the officer reasonably believes, based on the totality of the circumstances, that such force is necessary for either of the following reasons: (1) to defend against an imminent threat of death or serious bodily injury to the officer or to another person; or (2) to apprehend a fleeing person for any felony that threatened or resulted in death or serious bodily injury, if the officer reasonably believes that the person will cause death or serious bodily injury to another unless immediately apprehended. Penal Code section 835a(c)(1)(A) & (B).

A threat of death or serious bodily injury is imminent when, based on the totality of the circumstances, a reasonable officer in the same situation would believe a person has the present ability, opportunity, and apparent intent to immediately cause death or serious bodily injury to the peace officer or another person. An imminent harm is not merely a fear of future harm, no matter how great the fear and no matter how great the likelihood of the harm, but is one that, from appearances, must be instantly confronted and addressed. Penal Code section 835a(e)(2).

When considering the totality of the circumstances, all facts known to or perceived by the peace officer at the time, including the conduct of the officer and the subject leading up to the use of deadly force, are taken into consideration. Penal Code section 835a(a)(4) & (e)(3). The peace officer's decision to use force is not evaluated with the benefit of hindsight and shall account for occasions when officers may be forced to make quick judgments about using force. Penal Code section 835a(a)(4).

In evaluating whether a police officer's use of deadly force was reasonable in a specific situation, it is helpful to draw guidance from the objective standard of reasonableness adopted in civil actions alleging Fourth Amendment violations. "The 'reasonableness' of a particular use of force must be judged from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene, rather than with the 20/20 vision of hindsight... The calculus of reasonableness must embody allowance for the fact that police officers are often forced to make split-second judgments—in circumstances that are tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving—about the amount of force that is necessary in a particular situation." *Graham v. Connor* (1989) 490 U.S. 386, 396-397.

Salah was driving through a crowded employee parking lot with a passenger when Ceja walked in front of his patrol vehicle pointing what Salah believed was a black, semiautomatic handgun in his direction. Salah and other deputies gave Ceja commands to drop the handgun. Ceja did not comply and continued pointing the handgun directly at Salah. Based on the totality of the circumstances, Salah reasonably believed the use of deadly force was necessary to defend against an imminent threat of serious bodily injury or death to Salah and others when he discharged his duty weapon. The fact that the handgun was later found to be an airsoft pistol does not alter the reasonableness of Salah's actions.

## CONCLUSION

We find that Deputy Tarek Salah acted in lawful self-defense and the defense of others when he fired his duty weapon.

# COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

*A TRADITION OF SERVICE*

## INCIDENT REPORT

DATE 03-01-20 PAGE 1 OF 3

ACTION: ☒ ACTIVE ☐ INACTIVE ☐ PENDING | NON-CRIMINAL ☐ | # OF ADULT ARRESTS 0 | # OF SUBJECT DETENTIONS 0

URN# 0 (RETENTION) 20 (YEAR) 03105 (SEQUENTIAL) 0000 (REPORTING DISTRICT) 013 (STAT CODE) | TAG# 139

CLASSIFICATION 1 / LEVEL / STAT CODE: ASSAULT WITH A DEADLY WEAPON ON A PEACE OFFICER 245(c)(1) PC/F/013

CLASSIFICATION 2 / LEVEL / STAT CODE:

CLASSIFICATION 3 / LEVEL / STAT CODE:

CLASSIFICATION 4 / LEVEL / STAT CODE:

ADDITIONAL STAT CODES: ☐ ASAP / 83 ☐ GANG RELATED / 860 ☐ CYBER - RELATED CRIME / 552 ☐ FIREARM RELATED / 830 ☐ CYBER CRIME / 551 ☐ CYBER - RELATED INCIDENT (NON - CRIMINAL) / 559 ☐ OTHER

DATE / TIME / DAY OF OCCURRENCE: 03-01-20 / 1429 HR / SUNDAY | ☐ PRINTS REQUESTED ☐ PRINTS COMPLETED | REQUESTED BY: N/R | TIME

LOCATION OF OCCURRENCE: 27340 MAGIC MOUNTAIN PKWY. VALENCIA CA 91355 | BUSINESS NAME: SANTA CLARITA SHERIFF STATION

CODE: V - VICTIM • W - WITNESS • I - INFORMANT • R - REPORTING PARTY • P - PARTY

| CODE | # | of | LAST NAME | FIRST NAME | MIDDLE NAME | SEX | RACE | DOB | AGE | DRIVER'S LICENSE / STATE ID |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | 1 | 1 | DEPUTY SALAH | TAREK | | M | W | [redacted] | [redacted] | |

RESIDENCE ADDRESS: LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT | CITY | STATE | ZIP | RESIDENCE PHONE (Area Code)

BUSINESS / SCHOOL (GRADE) ADDRESS: 27340 MAGIC MOUNTAIN PKWY | CITY: VALENCIA | STATE: CA | ZIP: 91355 | BUSINESS PHONE (Area Code): 661-255-1121

ETHNIC ORIGIN | EMAIL ADDRESS | SOCIAL NETWORKING ACCOUNT | CELL PHONE (Area Code)

VICTIM OF OFFENSE(S) (CLASSIFICATION) #: # # # # # | VICTIM DESIROUS OF PROSECUTION? ☐ YES ☐ NO | VICTIM OF SEX CRIME DESIROUS OF CONFIDENTIALITY? ☐ YES ☐ NO | ENGLISH SPEAKING? ☐ YES ☐ NO | LANGUAGE

| CODE | # | of | LAST NAME | FIRST NAME | MIDDLE NAME | SEX | RACE | DOB | AGE | DRIVER'S LICENSE / STATE ID |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | | | |

RESIDENCE ADDRESS | CITY | STATE | ZIP | RESIDENCE PHONE (Area Code)

BUSINESS / SCHOOL (GRADE) ADDRESS | CITY | STATE | ZIP | BUSINESS PHONE (Area Code)

ETHNIC ORIGIN | EMAIL ADDRESS | SOCIAL NETWORKING ACCOUNT | CELL PHONE (Area Code)

VICTIM OF OFFENSE(S) (CLASSIFICATION) #: # # # # # | VICTIM DESIROUS OF PROSECUTION? ☐ YES ☐ NO | VICTIM OF SEX CRIME DESIROUS OF CONFIDENTIALITY? ☐ YES ☐ NO | ENGLISH SPEAKING? ☐ YES ☐ NO | LANGUAGE

CODE: S - SUSPECT • SJ - SUBJECT • M - PATIENT • S/V - SUSPECT / VICTIM • SJ / V - SUBJECT / VICTIM

| CODE | # | of | LAST NAME | FIRST NAME | MIDDLE NAME | DOB | AGE | DRIVER'S LICENSE / STATE ID |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | 1 | 1 | CEJA | RAYMUNDO | AARON | 06-28-87 | 32 | [redacted] / CA |

SEX: M | RACE: H | ETHNIC ORIGIN: — | HAIR: BLK | EYES: BRN | HEIGHT: 600 | WEIGHT: 200 | CELL PHONE (Area Code): —

RESIDENCE ADDRESS: [redacted] | CITY: [redacted] | STATE: [redacted] | ZIP: [redacted] | RESIDENCE PHONE (Area Code): —

BUSINESS / SCHOOL (GRADE) ADDRESS | CITY | STATE | ZIP | BUSINESS PHONE (Area Code): —

AKA: — | EMAIL ADDRESS: — | SOCIAL NETWORKING ACCOUNT: — | ENGLISH SPEAKING? ☐ YES ☐ NO | LANGUAGE: —

MONIKER: — | CHARGE | BOOKING NUMBER: — | WHERE DETAINED OR CITE NUMBER: —

| CODE | # | of | LAST NAME | FIRST NAME | MIDDLE NAME | DOB | AGE | DRIVER'S LICENSE / STATE ID |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |

SEX | RACE | ETHNIC ORIGIN | HAIR | EYES | HEIGHT | WEIGHT | CELL PHONE (Area Code)

RESIDENCE ADDRESS | CITY | STATE | ZIP | RESIDENCE PHONE (Area Code)

BUSINESS / SCHOOL (GRADE) ADDRESS | CITY | STATE | ZIP | BUSINESS PHONE (Area Code)

AKA | EMAIL ADDRESS | SOCIAL NETWORKING ACCOUNT | ENGLISH SPEAKING? ☐ YES ☐ NO | LANGUAGE

MONIKER | CHARGE | BOOKING NUMBER | WHERE DETAINED OR CITE NUMBER

BY DEPUTY: PINEDA, A | EMPLOYEE #: [redacted] | SWORN EXP IN YRS: 1 | DEPUTY: SANCHEZ, B. | EMPLOYEE #: [redacted] | SWORN EXP IN YRS: 12 | VACATION DATES: —

STATION: SCT | UNIT / CAR #: 66 | SHIFT: P | APPROVED: SGT. AARON JACOB | EMPLOYEE #: [redacted] | DATE / TIME: 3-02-20/0115

PCD SUBMITTED? ☐ YES ☒ NO | VACATION DATES: — | ASSIGNMENT: HOMICIDE

HQ NOTIFICATION REQUESTED? ☐ YES ☒ NO | DEPUTY | DATE / TIME | SPECIAL REQUEST DISTRIBUTION

LARCIS &
SCANNED
P. Dobrzanski
Date: 3-2-2020

SUSPECT / SUBJECT FIELD RELEASE APPROVED BY: | DATE / TIME | CRIME BROADCAST BY: | DATE / TIME | SECRETARY

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

# INCIDENT REPORT

*A TRADITION OF SERVICE*

URN# 020-03105-0600-013
TAG # 139
DATE 03-01-20 PAGE 2 OF 3

| VEHICLE | LICENSE (STATE & NUMBER) | YEAR | MAKE | MODEL | BODY TYPE | COLOR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VEHICLE FOR VICTIM # <br> VEHICLE FOR SUSPECT # 1 | [REDACTED]/CA | 2012 | HYUNDAI | SONATA | 4D | BLU |
| | REGISTERED OWNER: [REDACTED] | IDENTIFYING FEATURES: — | | | | |
| STATUS: ☐ STOLEN ☒ STORED ☐ DAMAGED ☐ IMPOUNDED ☐ EMBEZZLED ☐ OUTSTANDING | CHP 180 SUBMITTED? ☒ YES ☐ NO | GARAGE NAME & PHONE: WOLF TOWING 661-259-7676 | | | | |
| DESCRIPTION OF DAMAGE: — | | | | | | |

| VEHICLE | LICENSE (STATE & NUMBER) | YEAR | MAKE | MODEL | BODY TYPE | COLOR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VEHICLE FOR VICTIM # <br> VEHICLE FOR SUSPECT # | | | | | | |
| | REGISTERED OWNER | IDENTIFYING FEATURES | | | | |
| STATUS: ☐ STOLEN ☐ STORED ☐ DAMAGED ☐ IMPOUNDED ☐ EMBEZZLED ☐ OUTSTANDING | CHP 180 SUBMITTED? ☐ YES ☐ NO | GARAGE NAME & PHONE | | | | |
| DESCRIPTION OF DAMAGE | | | | | | |

## SCREENING FACTORS

- ☐ 1. SUSPECT IN CUSTODY
- ☒ 2. SUSPECT NAMED / KNOWN
- ☐ 3. UNIQUE SUSPECT IDENTIFIERS
- ☐ 4. VEHICLE IN CUSTODY
- ☐ 5. UNIQUE VEHICLE IDENTIFIERS
- ☐ 6. WRITER/REVIEWER DISCRETION

## PROPERTY CODE:

**S – STOLEN • R – RECOVERED • L – LOST • F – FOUND • E – EMBEZZLED • D – DAMAGED • K – SAFEKEEPING**
(Use all applicable Codes; for example, if property is both Stolen and Recovered, Code is S/R)

RELEASED TO

| CODE | ITEM # | QUAN. | DESCRIPTION (Include kind of article, trade name, identifying numbers, physical description, material, color, condition, age and present market value) | SERIAL # | VALUE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| — | | | SEE PAGE 3 FOR NARRATIVE | — | — |

On the indicated date and time, the suspect pointed a firearm at the victim who was wearing his departmental uniform. The victim was driving a marked patrol vehicle. A Deputy involved shooting occurred. This occurred at the Santa Clarita Station employee parking lot. We responded to the Santa Clarita Station as Deputies requested assistance via their Los Angeles County issued radio.

Upon our arrival, I observed the suspect laying on the ground in the north end of the parking lot. He was bleeding from his torso area.

The suspect was transported to Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital (23845 McBean Pkwy.) by Los Angeles County Fire Engine 129, Captain Oldham.

Deputy Westerfield, S. (#[redacted]) and Deputy Boccanedes, J. (#[redacted]) escorted the suspect to Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital. See their supplemental report for further.

The suspect was pronounced deceased by Dr. Contreras at 1505 hours at Henry Mayo Newhall Hospital. At approximately 1519 hours, I contacted Los Angeles County Homicide Bureau and spoke with Security Officer Bolanos (#[redacted]) who issued Coroner Case number 2020-01868.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Arson and Explosives Detective Schulze, J. (#[redacted]) and Detective Valencia, C. (#[redacted]) arrived to the indicated location at approximately 1710 hours.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Crime Lab Specialist Marmolejo, M. (#[redacted]) arrived to the indicated location at approximately 1800 hours.

Homicide Bureau Detective Obrien, J. (#[redacted]) and assisting Homicide Bureau detectives arrived to the scene at approximately 1800 hours and took command of the investigation.